United Nations E/2008/SR.39

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

29 September 2008

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Substantive session of 2008
General segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 39th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 22 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Hoscheit (Vice-President) ..... (Luxembourg)

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-43243 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(g) Tobacco or health (*continued*) (E/2008/59; E/2008/L.19)

1. **The President**, recalling that the Director of the World Health Organization Tobacco-Free Initiative had introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control (E/2008/59) at the 38th meeting, invited the Council to resume its consideration of the agenda item concerned.

2. **Mr. Álvarez** (Uruguay) said that his country's firm commitment to tobacco control initiatives was reflected internationally in its ratification of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and nationally in its ban on smoking in enclosed public places, which dated back to 2006. It was the only country in Latin America with such a policy. As smokers not only ran the risk of contracting a variety of diseases, but also endangered the health of others, it was the responsibility of all Member States to keep the workplace and enclosed public spaces free of tobacco smoke and it was the responsibility of the Organization to set an example in the field of public health.

3. Cigarette smoking generated costs in terms of human resources management, causing staff to miss work because of illness and resulting in medical and health-care expenditure, early retirement due to ill health, lower productivity, lost working time due to smoking breaks and higher building costs due to the provision of smoking areas. The capital master plan incorporated calculation of the cost of air conditioning for such areas. The General Assembly should take action to follow up Council resolution 2006/42, and ensure that United Nations premises were smoke free at the earliest possible opportunity.

4. **Mr. Limeres** (Observer for Argentina) said that his delegation supported and promoted the policy of keeping enclosed public spaces and workplaces completely free of tobacco smoke and allowing smoking only in the open air and away from buildings' sources of ventilation. Ratification of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which Argentina had signed in 2003, was pending in the Senate. Meanwhile, seven provinces and many municipalities had enacted legislation which would result in the protection of 14 million people from tobacco smoke in public places, and Argentina, which took part as an observer in the Conference of the Parties, was involved in cooperation to promote tobacco control in the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) region. It welcomed the draft Council decision on smoke-free United Nations premises, and urged the General Assembly to act on the Council's wish and ensure that the Organization set an example by working towards a smoking ban.

5. **Ms. Isler** (Observer for Switzerland) said that her delegation supported the Council's initiative on smoke-free United Nations premises, recognizing that exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke must be addressed in order to ensure a healthy workplace. It hoped that United Nations Headquarters would follow the example of the smoking policy of the United Nations Office at Geneva and that the Member States would take appropriate action at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

6. **Mr. Hirsch** (Observer for Norway) said that his Government fully supported the long-standing tobacco-control efforts of the World Health Organization, and hoped that the General Assembly would take appropriate action at its sixty-third session.

Draft decision entitled "Smoke-free United Nations premises" (E/2008/L.19)

7. **The President** informed the Council that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

8. **Mr. Adsett** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, recalled that the Council had drawn the attention of the General Assembly two years previously to the need to take action against exposure to tobacco smoke. A number of Member States had themselves banned smoking in public places, recognizing that there was no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Banning smoking and the sale of tobacco on United Nations premises was not an edict to diplomats to give up cigarettes, but rather an effort to protect health in the workplace. The three delegations hoped that the draft Council decision would find support in the General Assembly.

9. *Draft decision E/2008/L.19 was adopted.*

Oral draft decision entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control"

10. **The President** invited the Council to adopt the following oral draft decision on the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control:

> "The Economic and Social Council *decides* to request the Secretary-General to submit a report on the work of the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control to the Council at its substantive session of 2010."

11. *The oral draft decision entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control" was adopted.*

Social and human rights questions

(i) Genetic privacy and non-discrimination (E/2008/51)

12. **Mr. Seth** (Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on genetic privacy and non-discrimination (E/2008/51), said that the issue had been on the Council's agenda on a triennial basis since 2001. The report before the Council presented Member States' and United Nations entities' responses to a note verbale requesting views on the most appropriate forums for the consideration of genetic privacy. While the response rate had once again been low, the wish had emerged that United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), WHO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, should remain involved and that the Council should invite the Director-General of UNESCO to consult with other United Nations entities on the implementation of, and follow-up to, Council resolutions 2001/39 and 2004/9 and relevant UNESCO declarations, and to constitute an inter-agency coordination mechanism which should report every three years to the Council, beginning in 2010.

13. **Mr. Falatar** (Observer for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that any scientific revolution brought with it ethical and social questions. There had been broad international debate on reconciling the benefits of progress in genetics with certain core human values. The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, the International Declaration on Human Genetic Data and the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights constituted the only international framework approved and recognized by the Member States. While the instruments in question had been adopted within the framework of UNESCO, and any further international action should be grounded within the ethical principles contained in them, no single forum could address the issue alone: the roles of each organization in the United Nations system remained relevant.

Draft decision entitled "Genetic privacy and non-discrimination" (E/2008/L.20)

14. **The President** informed the Council that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

15. *Draft decision E/2008/L.20 was adopted.*

United Nations research and training institutes (E/2008/72)

16. **Ms. Thouez** (Observer for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) (E/2008/72), recalled that the General Assembly, in paragraph 9 of its resolution 62/210 on UNITAR, had urged measures to draw more sufficient and predictable support from Member States, in particular for the Institute's core diplomatic training, which was distinct from, and broader than, its training and capacity-building activities in other fields.

17. The report had been prepared in compliance with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 62/210. Henceforth, however, reports of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the Institute would be consolidated and submitted to the Council rather than to the General Assembly on the basis of a biennial reporting cycle beginning in 2009 .

18. With a reconstituted Board of Trustees, the Institute had embarked on major strategic reform, including implementation of the remaining Board of Auditors recommendations, dating from 2002 and 2003, to mould it into a centre of excellence in standard-setting, training and training methods and research. While UNITAR was excelling financially and had the second largest budget of all the training and research bodies in the United Nations system, the one

area of its activity that remained unable to operate as financially self-sufficient was its core diplomatic training. Core diplomatic training had historically been funded using voluntary, non-earmarked contributions, but such contributions had been in progressive decline, representing currently only 2.4 per cent of the total UNITAR budget. Yet core diplomatic training, a unique service provided by the Organization for all of its Member States, offered important courses and workshops on the United Nations system and its operation and represented 5 per cent of the total number of individuals trained each year.

19. Regular evaluations of the courses indicated considerable satisfaction on the part of trainees, and demand for them was increasing. While a greater number of Member States were requesting the services of UNITAR to train their officials, fewer of them were contributing the non-earmarked funds that enabled such services to be offered in a multilateral environment. As he had in his 2007 report (A/62/377), the Secretary-General recommended in the report currently before the Council that, as a first priority, the Fifth Committee should reconsider the issue of financing core diplomatic training from the United Nations regular budget, specifically urging that half the cost be so financed . Support from the United Nations regular budget would be a show of solidarity for continuous learning and for reform efforts to make the United Nations a venue for effective and efficient decision-making.

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(d) Long-term programme of support for Haiti (E/2008/90; E/2008/L.15)

20. **Mr. Adsett** (Canada), speaking as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, introduced the report of the Advisory Group (E/2008/90), noting that the cancellation of the Group's planned mission to Haiti in May 2008 following the dissolution of that country's Government did not affect the relevance of the Group's recommendations, since the situation in Haiti had not changed much since the previous year. Indeed, most of the challenges described in the previous year's report remained acute and some of the recommendations contained therein had simply been repeated. One notable development since 2007 was the finalization of the national growth and poverty reduction strategy paper. That paper, the key policy document for all stakeholders in Haiti's development, linked all sectors and addressed long-, medium-, short-, and immediate-term needs.

21. Noting that political stability was crucial to development work in Haiti, he expressed the hope that a new Government would be put in place as soon as possible in order to implement the Group's recommendation. Haiti must remain on the international agenda and continue to receive appropriate support. A strong United Nations presence on the ground, including through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), was essential. Moreover, the events of April 2008 had reinforced the argument that, for progress to be made, all relevant stakeholders must reassess how they conducted business in Haiti.

22. The Group hoped that the Government of Haiti and the international community would consider its recommendations as a useful summary of what needed to be addressed and not as a comprehensive road map. Noting that much could still be done to enhance the understanding of the challenges facing Haiti and the efforts needed to help that country, he hoped that the Council would allow the Group to continue its work for at least another year.

Draft resolution entitled "Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti (E/2008/L.15)

23. **Mr. Arsenault** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Benin, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Spain, and Trinidad and Tobago, introduced the draft resolution entitled "Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti" (E/2008/L.15) and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus.

24. **Ms. Bourgiugnon** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union deplored the loss of life and damage caused by Haiti's food-related riots of April 2008 and reiterated its support for the Haitian President's efforts to achieve political, economic and social stability. As was clear from those riots, MINUSTAH played an essential role in maintaining public security and the rule of law and should therefore remain in place, with no reduction in its strength.

25. The European Union welcomed the improvement in the security situation and the implementation of reforms of the police, justice and border management

sectors. Those reforms, along with an urgently needed reform of the prison system, would help to establish the rule of law in the country.

26. The European Union followed with interest the work being done on a consolidation plan. The plan must include a medium-term strategy for the gradual and successful handing over to Haitians of the functions currently carried out by the international community.

27. The European Union reiterated its long-term standing support for the Haitian people and authorities. It would continue to work closely with other donors and the wider international community to support the Haitian authorities in their efforts to meet the urgent needs of the Haitian people and achieve political and social stability. The European Union was, therefore, in favour of extending the Group's mandate.

(f) Ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflict (A/63/83-E/2008/77; E/2008/55)

28. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, introduced the report of that Group (E/2008/55). After providing an overview of the Group's work since its establishment in 2002, highlighting its main accomplishments, and putting forward some key recommendations, the report recommended the termination of the Group's mandate at the current substantive session of the Council. Since December 2007, Guinea-Bissau had been considered by the Peacebuilding Commission. He hoped that, as a result, Guinea-Bissau would benefit from sustained attention at a higher level. Moreover, the Group's recommendations continued to be relevant and should be considered by the Peacebuilding Commission in the integrated peacebuilding strategy that was currently being designed.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 4.10 p.m.

29. *A panel discussion on the topic of "The Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission" was conducted. The panel was chaired by Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President of the Council. The Panellists were Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Mr. Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations; and Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.*

United Nations E/2008/SR.40

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

29 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
General segment

Provisional summary record of the 40th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 23 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Hoscheit (Vice-President) ..... (Luxembourg)

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Regional cooperation (*continued*)

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(d) Long-term programme of support for Haiti (*continued*)

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08-43516 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(e) Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations System (E/2008/53)

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*) (E/2008/77)

(k) Women and development (E/2008/27)

Social and human rights questions (E/2008/77)

(a) Advancement of women (E/2008/27, E/2008/53, E/2008/62, E/2008/73 and E/2008/91)

1. **Ms. Mayanja** (Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 62/208, with its strong gender component, had shown governments' undiminished resolve to find effective, lasting solutions to the challenges of gender inequality and underdevelopment. The Ministerial Declaration adopted at the 2008 high-level segment of the Council (E/2008/L.10) reflected the importance of gender equality to implementation of the internationally agreed goals and commitments on sustainable development. The upcoming High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be held on 25 September 2008; the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha on 2 December 2008; the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ongoing review of system-wide coherence would provide opportunities to build on the progress achieved and to bridge the gap between policies and implementation.

2. Turning to the report of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/2008/27), she said that the priority theme and the review theme of the Commission's fifty-second session — which had been, respectively, financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women and women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding — were relevant both to the Council's work and to implementation of the MDGs. While the 2002 Monterrey Consensus had recognized gender equality, women's empowerment and poverty eradication as development goals, it contained little in the way of concrete action plans or policy recommendations for meeting them. At the country level, policy initiatives in those areas often failed because insufficient resources were allocated to their implementation. The Commission's agreed conclusions on financing for gender equality and women's empowerment (E/CN.6/2008/L.8) suggested innovative ways to strengthen financing for those purposes.

3. The 2007 Global Monitoring Report: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States, prepared by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, made it clear that in implementing the MDGs, the global community was more focused on halving poverty and improving health and education than on Goal No. 3 ("Promote gender equality, and empower women"). Not only was that goal valuable in its own right as an important development objective, it was also key to achieving all the other goals.

4. Women's empowerment was also an essential element of the overall human rights regime. On 1 January 2008, responsibility for servicing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been transferred from the Division for the Advancement of Women to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Committee had held two sessions since that transfer, which had been completed smoothly.

5. Violence against women was high on the international agenda. The Secretary-General's campaign, Unite to End Violence against Women, had been launched on 25 February 2008 at the fifty-second session of the Commission. The campaign, which would end in 2015, affirmed the link between violence against women and girls and poverty reduction and development and provided a historic opportunity to galvanize action on one of the most widespread human rights violations. Recent United Nations action on the issue included the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 62/133 ("Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women") and 134 ("Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations") and Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) ("Women and peace and

security"). However, despite those commitments by Member States and the United Nations system, violence against women continued to occur in all countries and at all stages of development. Much more needed to be done by States, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector, women and men in order to put an end to the problem.

6. Because women constituted the majority of the world's poorest people and were subject to discrimination, the impact of climate change — including drought, rising temperatures and extreme weather events — made it particularly difficult for them to re-establish their livelihoods. A ministerial round table breakfast on the topic of "Migration, environment and climate change: the gender perspective", organized by her Office, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and held on 2 July 2008, had explored the links among climate change, environmental degradation and migration.

7. She welcomed the Commission's decision to select climate change as the emerging issue for its most recent session, as well as the President's statement on the occasion of the special meeting of the Council on the global food crisis (E/2008/66) and his focus on agriculture in developing countries. Since women produced 40 to 80 per cent of agricultural outputs in Africa and Asia, gender equality should be central to the discussion of climate change and food security.

8. During the past year, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), which represented over 30 United Nations entities, had been the centre of the Organization's action on gender mainstreaming. Its mandates were prominent in the General Assembly's and the Council's resolutions on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and its task forces reflected its priorities: follow-up to the Secretary-General's aforementioned campaign, tracking financing for gender work, climate change and capacity-building for gender mainstreaming. The Network was making progress in implementing the system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and the strategy for gender mainstreaming, which had been adopted in October 2006 in order to close the gaps between policy and practice. It had adopted draft standards for the system-wide policy and strategy and United Nations country teams performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment in order to ensure a coherent, results-based and effective approach to gender mainstreaming at Headquarters and in the field.

9. The Network had given priority to system-wide capacity-building for all staff, gender experts and senior management and had organized joint workshops with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Network on Gender Equality, most recently in Paris in January 2008 on the topic of partnerships of multilateral and bilateral agencies in scaling up support to partner country efforts to achieve gender equality.

10. She paid tribute to Ms. Carmen Moreno, former Director of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), who had retired in June 2008. Successful completion of the INSTRAW Strategic Framework 2004-2007 had strategically positioned the Institute to contribute to the three pillars of the United Nations: development, peace and security and human rights. It had secured sufficient funds to finance its core activities in 2008 and to fully reimburse the subvention of $557,800 that it had received from the Organization's regular budget; voluntary contributions to its regular operations had also increased. However, it needed to ensure greater visibility of its work in order to sustain that trend.

11. With regard to progress in the system-wide coherence review, at the informal consultations of the General Assembly held on 16 May and 16 June 2008, Member States had requested, and the Deputy Secretary-General had submitted, a note dated 6 June 2008 on the United Nations system support to Member States on gender equality and women's empowerment. Member States had strongly reaffirmed that gender equality was central to achievement of the three pillars and that gaps and weaknesses in the Organization's support should be addressed effectively. In a letter dated 19 June 2008, the President of the General Assembly had conveyed to the Secretary-General, on behalf of the Permanent Representatives of Tanzania and Ireland as co-chairpersons on system-wide coherence, a request for a paper on institutional options to strengthen United Nations work on gender equality and women's empowerment; that paper would soon be completed.

12. Although the advancement of women was proceeding more slowly on some issues than she would

have wished, it was accelerating at both the national and international levels. While the primary responsibility for advancement lay at the national level, success also required a supportive international environment. Much had been achieved, but more needed to be done; the collective potential of the United Nations must be harnessed in support of Member States' implementation of their national gender equality strategies. The current session of the Council provided an opportunity to think creatively about ways to bridge the gap between commitments and implementation and to summon the necessary political will in light of the proposal that the Council's 2010 annual ministerial review should focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women.

13. **Ms. Abdelrahman** (Sudan) said that the report of the Secretary-General's on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2008/53) would help States take action to empower women and to allocate greater resources for that purpose.

14. The Sudan was deeply convinced of the need for such action at the regional and international levels. It was essential to ensure the implementation of United Nations decisions aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of women and achieving social justice. Those decisions needed to be integrated into national legal systems. The Sudan complied with General Assembly resolutions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and on combating the trafficking of women and girls, and welcomed the Beijing Declaration adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. His Government believed that the dignity of women was the fundamental principle for such action and remained committed to its cultural and religious traditions, which called for the advancement and empowerment of women.

15. Women in the Sudan were asserting their constitutional rights and competing for senior political posts. The 2008 National Electoral Law established a 25 per cent quota for women members of parliament, an unprecedented achievement for women and the 2005 Transitional Constitution, adopted in the wake of the peace agreement between North and South, affirmed gender equality and non-discrimination. The Government of National Unity had worked to eliminate violence against women and to raise awareness of legal rights. Between 2002 and 2007, a national strategy had been in place in order to ensure practical application of the relevant laws. In 2007, parliament had enacted a National Women's Empowerment Policy. The Policy sought to provide educational opportunities for all girls, including those with special needs; to ensure women's participation in the drafting of laws on women's issues and in peacebuilding; and to encourage research, training and awareness-raising campaigns in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with funding from the Organization. His delegation hoped that the relevant United Nations agencies would continue their valuable work in gender mainstreaming, and that donor States would provide funding for development goals, including the advancement and empowerment of women.

16. **Ms. Khioka** (Iraq) said that for decades, women in her country had been marginalized and had suffered injustice under dictatorial rule. Despite the challenges of the previous five years, and notably the global threat of terrorism, the country was moving towards freedom and democracy. Women were playing increasingly prominent roles underscored by the International Women of Courage Award, presented by the Secretary of State of the United States of America to Dr. Iman al-Juburi on 10 March 2008.

17. National strategies were in place to address women's issues. The new Iraqi Constitution, the most progressive in the region, granted full political rights and responsibilities to men and women alike and allowed women to leave the country without a male relative. It stressed the family, providing for social and health security, housing and minimum income, and stated that 25 per cent of members of parliament should be women. There were currently four women ministers, and women were increasingly represented in the foreign and diplomatic services.

18. Iraq looked forward to membership of the Council's Commission on the Status of Women from 2009 to 2013. A wide range of awareness-raising campaigns had been organized, including in relation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Awards were available for women of distinction.

19. Although Iraq had made substantial progress in gender equality issues in comparison with other Arab States, it s assistance from States and regional and

international organizations, and was grateful for the support that it had received.

20. **Mr. McMahan** (United States of America) said he regretted that at its current session, the Council had not had time to fully consider the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (E/2008/53).

21. Since 2000, the United States of America had devoted over US$ 500 million to combating trafficking in persons, a practice that violated human rights, increased global health risks and fuelled the growth of organized crime. His delegation believed that the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was the best multilateral tool for preventing trafficking, prosecuting traffickers and protecting the victims. It questioned the utility of any strategy or plan of action that duplicated the existing Protocol and would prefer to focus on improving its implementation by providing resources for technical assistance and strengthening the role of the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT).

22. During its June 2008 presidency of the Security Council and at the previous session of the General Assembly, his delegation had sponsored resolutions dealing with sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. He was gratified that those resolutions had been adopted and hoped that Member States and the United Nations system would take steps to implement them in full, together with other resolutions on violence against women and women's empowerment.

23. His Government also supported maternal health interventions related to pregnancy and childbirth around the world. In particular, it had increased funding for the prevention and treatment of obstetric fistula, an issue discussed at the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, from US$ 1 million to US$ 11 million between 2004 and 2007.

24. There were still too few women in high-level posts in the Organization; although the Secretary-General had appointed several women to head United Nations agencies, only one woman currently served as his special representative, none served as special envoys and few women held D-1 or D-2 posts. Greater efforts should be made to recruit highly qualified women candidates.

25. **Ms. Zhang** Dan (China) said that one of the most important issues facing the international community was that of ensuring that women participated equally in and benefited from development. In view of the impact of globalization, urbanization and other factors on those issues, the international community should fully implement the Monterrey Consensus by increasing gender awareness, reducing debt, opening markets, reforming international trade mechanisms, overcoming institutional barriers to financing for development and improving international partnerships.

26. In the context of its rapidly developing economy, her Government was emphasizing coherent social, economic and cultural development by focusing on improving livelihoods, promoting a harmonious society and creating a favourable environment for gender equality. In the past year, the Government had earnestly implemented the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century". It had also actively implemented the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, focusing on the MDGs, comprehensive improvement of the status of women and promotion of their participation in development.

27. For the first time, a separate chapter on the rights and interests of women had been included in China's national development plan. The Government was encouraging women to participate in public administration and priority was being given to providing them with non-agricultural training in order to improve their employment competitiveness. A national seminar on implementation of the Convention, at which Government ministries, women's organizations, the news media and United Nations representatives in China had participated, had been organized. New legislation was marked by a greater emphasis on gender issues; provisions on the protection of women's rights and interests were included in the new Personal Property Law and in the Law on Promoting Women's Employment and the State Council had issued a note on the prevention of domestic violence.

28. **Ms. Kulzhanova** (Kazakhstan) said that the outcome documents of the Fourth World Conference on

Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had far-reaching significance. The Second Eurasian Summit of Women, organized by a Kazakh non-governmental organization (NGO) with support from the Government and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and held in Astana in June 2008, had demonstrated the success of the bottom-up approach. The Summit, which had been attended by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and over 400 women from the region, had provided an opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities for women's participation in economic activities and politics.

29. Although gender issues were central to development and to achievement of the MDGs, problems related to the status of women and gender equality were an ongoing concern. Women continued to have unequal access to resources and opportunities and to be subjected to abuse, poverty and discrimination. They should be given an equal opportunity to participate in economic development, by providing them with capacity-building and access to microcredit, particularly in rural areas, and by analysing and bridging wage gaps. Gender-sensitive budgeting was an effective tool for improving the status of women, especially those living in poverty.

30. In order to increase the number of women in decision-making posts, efforts should be made to facilitate the reconciliation of work and personal or family life by offering child and dependent care, parental leave and flexible working schemes for both men and women. It was also important to incorporate a gender perspective into national legislation and policies and into the development programmes of United Nations agencies, making the necessary budget allocations.

31. The issue of the advancement of women was multifaceted and included the need to combat violence and trafficking in persons. Climate change and food crises could also pose a threat to achievement of the MDGs. Gender equality issues must become an intrinsic part of the agenda and daily activities of all United Nations bodies, including the Secretariat. Her delegation looked forward to reading the Secretary-General's report on the new United Nations gender architecture and hoped that it would adequately reflect both the need to improve the existing system and the challenges that lay ahead.

32. **Ms. Park** Enna (Republic of Korea) said that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment was one of the core mandates of the United Nations as a critical prerequisite for attaining the MDGs, ensuring the universal enjoyment of human rights and dignity and addressing global challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, epidemics and armed conflicts. Her delegation welcomed efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into all United Nations agencies and agendas and to prevent violence against women, including through the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security; the launching of the Secretary-General's campaign, Unite to End Violence against Women; and the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict initiative.

33. The round table discussion on the topic of "The role of the Economic and Social Council in addressing violence against women in all its forms and manifestations: A dialogue with the chairpersons of the functional commissions", held on 8 July 2008 during the Council's coordination segment, had provided a meaningful opportunity to discuss the issue of violence against women. Because that problem constituted not only a violation of human dignity but a major impediment to gender equality and the empowerment of women, it should be addressed across the entire United Nations system, including the functional commissions. Her Government supported the Council's continued role in identifying the complementarity of those commissions on such issues and in reaffirming Member States' political will to promote the advancement of women.

34. Her delegation strongly supported the proposal to appoint an under-secretary-general for gender equality and empowerment of women in order to ensure gender mainstreaming at the highest levels of decision-making and to oversee and guide other bodies, as well as any proposal to strengthen the Organization's existing gender entities through increased capacity and funding. Concerning the proposal to consolidate the three existing entities, her delegation considered that the hybrid model proposed in the Deputy Secretary-General's concept note, dated 1 August 2007, on a strengthened architecture for gender equality and empowerment of women would provide a more coordinated structure and result in greater coherence than could be achieved through consolidation. Other options should not be excluded, provided that they

addressed the current overall weakness in coordination and coherence, accountability and resources.

35. Lastly, her delegation valued the agreed conclusions of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the priority theme of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, it hoped that the outcome of that session would provide a foundation for Member States' integration of a gender perspective into national budgets and resource mobilization.

36. **Ms. Fedorovich** (Belarus) said that her delegation welcomed the Organization's expanded activities aimed at ensuring gender equality. The increased efforts by States and United Nations agencies in that area were an encouraging trend. Gender equality and expansion of the rights of women were a policy priority in Belarus, which allocated considerable resources for those purposes.

37. Women in her country were well represented in the Government, directed large companies and banks and played an active role in business. More than 20 women's organizations dealt with the issue of gender equality. Women in Belarus were traditionally well educated; 25 per cent of them had a higher education, as opposed to 20 percent of men, and they accounted for 51 per cent of the nation's scientists.

38. A key aspect of ensuring gender equality was combating trafficking in persons, and Belarus would continue to work consistently to broaden the Organization's activities in that field. The key to success was to enhance coordination of work by States, the United Nations agencies and the civil sector. An action plan clearly setting forth the tasks to be achieved would be an important instrument for improving such coordination.

39. It was also essential to enhance the Council's role in combating trafficking in persons and dealing with other aspects of gender equality. Lastly, her country supported the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and stressed the need to increase coordination between the Commission and other bodies that promoted the rights of women, including INSTRAW.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-second session (E/2008/27)

Agreed conclusions on financing gender equality and the empowerment of women

40. **The President** drew attention to Chapter I, Section A, of the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-second session (E/2008/27), which contained agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission for transmittal to the General Assembly as an input into the preparations for and outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to transmit the agreed conclusions to the General Assembly.

41. *It was so decided.*

Draft resolution entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women"

42. **The President** drew attention to Chapter I, Section B, of the report, which contained a draft resolution entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women". The draft resolution had been adopted by the Commission by a recorded vote of 33 to 1, with 9 abstentions. A roll-call vote had been requested.

43. **Ms. Eilon Shahar** (Observer for Israel), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the draft resolution was an annual, politically motivated initiative that ignored the reality on the ground, it was also the Commission's only geographically or politically specific draft resolution. If the drafters had had a genuine interest in helping Palestinian women, they would have mentioned the oppressive internal conditions imposed by the patriarchal bias embedded in Palestinian society and the associated domestic and gender-based violence, overt discrimination, female genital mutilation and honour killings.

44. In its recent report, "A Question of Security: Violence against Palestinian Women and Girls", Human Rights Watch had written that there were discriminatory laws that condoned and perpetrated such violence and that there were virtually no institutionalized policies to prevent it, assist the victims and hold the perpetrators accountable. Her Government supported efforts to improve the quality of life of Palestinian women and to offer them assistance. However, because the draft resolution did not address

the internal situation of human rights abuses or the suffering caused by Palestinian terrorism, it left much to be desired. She called on delegations to oppose it.

45. **Ms. Phipps** (United States), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the resolution was unbalanced, expressing concern about the victims of only one side of a protracted conflict. While it criticized Israel, which tried to distinguish between civilians and combatants in the course of its military activities, it ignored the purposeful targeting of civilians by Palestinian terrorists. Her delegation was deeply concerned about the impact of the current humanitarian crisis on Palestinian women and children, and on the entire Palestinian population. It deeply regretted both that Palestinian civilians had lost their lives during the recent clashes in the Gaza Strip and that Israelis, including women and children, had suffered and died from Palestinian terrorist attacks.

46. The United States of America was the largest bilateral donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), with contributions totaling more than $154 million in 2007. It also contributed significant amounts to many other international organizations providing assistance to Palestinian women and to the entire Palestinian population, as well as providing bilateral assistance to the Palestinian Authority in order to empower Palestinians economically.

47. Her delegation would vote against to the draft resolution, however, because it was unfair, unbalanced, and inconsistent with the universalist values of the Council. Moreover, sensitive permanent status issues such as those involving refugees should be resolved through negotiations between the two parties. Her Government was committed to working with the Quartet and with States of the region to move both parties towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The focus of the international community should be on helping both parties to maintain progress towards that objective. One-sided resolutions only served to undermine the ability of the United Nations to play a constructive role in the situation, making less attainable the peace that, more than anything else, would improve the lot of Palestinian women and of everyone caught up in the conflict.

48. *The vote was taken by roll-call.*

49. *Greece, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Cape Verde, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mozambique, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sudan.

Against:

Canada, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Austria, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Moldova, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saint Lucia, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

50. *The draft resolution was adopted by 25 votes to 2, with 17 abstentions.**

51. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) expressed her thanks to those delegations that had voted in favour of the draft resolution, which had reaffirmed respect for international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law at a time when the Palestinian people were facing heightened poverty, health-related issues, and the violation of their human rights and dignity.

52. The statement made by the representative of Israel distorted the context of the occupation while ignoring Israel's violations and crimes. It was shocking to speak as if Israel did not commit human rights violations and carry out unlawful policies and practices against the Palestinian people and as if it were not an occupying power of an entire people and a colonizer of their land. If Israel could not acknowledge its crimes and wrongdoings, how could it ever cease them and make amends?

53. It was also wrong for the delegation of Israel to comment on the internal Palestinian situation. The Palestinians did not comment on or meddle in Israel's internal political, economic or social affairs, despite the existence of sexual violence and discrimination by

* The delegations of the Philippines and Uruguay subsequently informed the Council that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

high-level officials, corruption, discrimination and other crimes.

54. Israel should stop trying to exploit the current situation to its own advantage, which could in no way benefit the cause of promoting peace and reconciliation Instead, it should focus on complying with the law, upholding its legal obligations as an occupying power and truly engaging in the peace process with a view to an end to the disastrous occupation and a peaceful settlement.

Draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-second session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-third session of the Commission"

55. **The President** drew the attention of the Council to Chapter I, Section C, of the report, which contained a draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-second session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-third session of the Commission".

56. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Council) drew attention to two amendments to the documentation for the fifty-third session of the Commission as listed in the draft decision. In paragraph 3 (c), the reference to the report of the Secretary-General on ending female genital mutilation should be deleted as that document had been requested for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission and a document entitled "Future work of the Working Group on Communications" should be added to paragraph 4.

57. *The draft decision was adopted.*

Regional cooperation (*continued*)

58. **The President** drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2008/15 and Add.1 and 2) and to documents entitled "The economic situation in the Economic Commission for Europe region: Europe, North America and the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2007-2008" (E/2008/16), "Overview of the economic and social conditions in Africa 2008" (E/2008/17), "Summary of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2008" (E/2008/18), "Latin America and the Caribbean: economic situation and outlook, 2007-2008" (E/2008/19) and "Summary of the economic and social developments in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, 2007-2008" (E/2008/20). If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to take note of those documents.

59. *It was so decided*

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(d) Long-term programme of support for Haiti (*continued*)

Draft resolution entitled "Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti" (E/2008/L.15)

60. **The President** drew attention to draft resolution E/2008/L.15 entitled, "Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti".

61. **Ms. Pliner** (Secretary of the Council), speaking on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution, said that under the terms of paragraphs 7, 8 and 10, the Council would decide to extend the mandate of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group until the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in July 2009, stressing the need to avoid overlap and duplication with respect to existing mechanisms; express its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for the support provided to the Advisory Group and request him to continue to support the Group's activities adequately and within existing resources; and request the Advisory Group to submit a report on its work, with recommendations, as appropriate, to the Council at its substantive session of 2009. The support to be provided to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group would consist of travel, daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses for a mission to Haiti in April 2009. The resource requirements for that mission were estimated at US$ 13,500 (US$ 11,500 for four members of the Advisory Group and US$ 2,000 for one staff member of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs), for which funds had not been provided in the programme budget for 2008-2009.

62. In his report on the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive and resumed substantive sessions of 2007 (A/62/515), which contained similar requests, the Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly that all possible efforts would be made to meet the estimated requirements of US$ 13,500 under Section 9,

Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 together with extrabudgetary funds. The April 2008 mission to Haiti had been cancelled. It was proposed that the requirements of US $13,500 for 2009 should be met in a similar manner.

63. On the basis of experience thus far in the 2008-2009 biennium, and since the estimated financing needed for activities requested in the draft resolution did not exceed US$ 13,500, all possible efforts would be made to meet those requirements as envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General. Accordingly, no additional appropriation would be required or sought from the General Assembly should the Council adopt the draft resolution.

64. *Draft resolution E/2008/L.15 was adopted.*

65. **Mr. Mérorès** (Haiti) expressed his country's gratitude at the adoption of the resolution, which was consistent with his Government's efforts to take a long-term approach to the country's development problems. While there was certainly a long way to go before those problems could be resolved, notably through long-term agricultural development, adoption of the resolution was a step in the right direction. He also expressed his Government's gratitude to countries that contributed to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.41

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

3 October 2008

Original: English

Substantive session for 2008
General segment

Provisional summary record of the 41st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 23 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Hoscheit (Vice-President) ..... (Luxembourg)

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Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)

(a) Sustainable development

(c) Statistics

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(e) Environment

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(i) Assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions

(j) Cartography

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08-43519 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*) (E/2008/77)

(a) Sustainable development (E/2008/29; E/2008/33)

(c) Statistics (E/2008/24)

(d) Human settlements (E/2008/64)

(e) Environment (A/63/25; E/2008/54)

(f) Population and development (E/2008/25)

(g) Public administration and development (E/2008/44)

(h) International cooperation in tax matters (E/2007/45 and E/2008/4)

(i) Assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions

(j) Cartography (E/2007/89; E/CONF.98/136)

1. **Ms. Johnson** (Committee for Development Policy), introducing the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its tenth session (E/2008/33), said that at its March 2008 session, the Committee had addressed three major themes: implementing the internationally agreed goals on sustainable development, the need for a development-supportive international financial architecture and the methodology for identifying the least developed countries.

2. In addressing the first theme, the Committee had considered how climate change could affect the achievement of sustainable development goals and had reported its findings and recommendations to the 2008 high-level segment of the Council. In particular, it believed that achieving the Millennium Development Goals while dealing with climate change required access by developing countries to sufficient funds and knowledge and the development of new technologies.

3. The Committee's analysis of the second theme had also been presented to the Council at the high-level segment. With developing countries suffering from the negative impact of external shocks, the existing compensatory financing architecture required urgent reform in order to reduce the need for those countries to maintain high levels of international reserves and to prevent economically and socially painful losses in employment and output.

4. With regard to the third theme, the Committee had confirmed the current approach used in identifying countries for inclusion in the list of least developed countries, which required the country to fall below the threshold levels on three criteria: gross national income per capita, the human assets index and the economic vulnerability index. Having reviewed several proposed refinements in the measures to be used in the 2009 triennial review of the list, it had concluded that the current procedures for identification of the least developed countries were based on the best available methods and information.

5. As regards graduation, the rules were that a country needed to fail to meet two, rather than only one, of the three inclusion criteria in order to be eligible for graduation; the thresholds for graduation were higher than those for inclusion and the country must be found eligible at two successive triennial reviews in order to be recommended for graduation. Those rules aimed to ensure that a country graduating from the list would be able to sustain progress with minimal risk of its development being disrupted.

6. Guided by paragraph 1 of Council resolution 2007/35, the Committee had thoroughly assessed a suggestion that it should be made compulsory for a country to meet the economic vulnerability index threshold in order to be considered for graduation, but it had concluded that the criteria should be left unchanged since a country could still attain steady economic growth even if it scored a high economic vulnerability index. The vulnerability profile conducted for countries found eligible for graduation for the first time should give the overall background of a country's economy and development situation, while the impact assessment should address the expected implications of the loss of least-developed-country status. In that regard, it was important for the development partners of the countries concerned to provide information on the likely treatment extended to the country if graduation became effective.

7. Since countries identified for graduation were often uncertain about the implications of losing the benefits of least-developed-country status, the Committee had proposed that an expert group should be convened to consider how the special support measures available for such countries might be phased

out in a predictable and orderly way so as not to disrupt their development. The Committee would also continue to monitor the development progress of graduated countries and would report its findings to the Council when it presented the triennial review of the list of least developed countries.

8. **Mr. Seth** (Director, Office of Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on products harmful to health and the environment (E/2008/54), said that the report had been prepared in response to Council decision 2007/264, in which the Council had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and relevant intergovernmental entities, to evaluate the continued usefulness for Member States of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale have been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or Not Approved by Governments.

9. When the consolidated list had been mandated in 1982 in order to disseminate information available within the United Nations system on products harmful to health and the environment, such information had not been widely circulated; more recently, the secretariats of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal had begun to provide information, by electronic or other means, that was much more detailed and accessible than that included in the list, rendering its continued publication redundant.

10. Member States and relevant intergovernmental entities had also been asked, pursuant to Council decision 2007/264, to submit their views on the continued usefulness of the Consolidated List. Very few responses had been received, which, in the Secretary-General's opinion, pointed to the diminishing value attached to the publication. His report therefore recommended the elimination of the mandate of regularly updating the list, as contained in General Assembly resolution 37/137.

11. **Ms. Gebre-Egziabher** (Director, New York Office, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2008/64), said that the report highlighted major new developments and milestones with a focus on outcomes and results and provided an analysis of their underlying rationale and processes. The report covered major decisions of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat; emerging responses to the challenges of rapid urbanization; human settlements and crises; and the initial results of "delivering as one", among other issues.

12. One of the key decisions of the twenty-first session of the Governing Council had been approval of its medium-term strategic and institutional plan, which sought to enhance the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda with the vision of creating, by 2013, the necessary conditions for more sustainable urbanization, including efforts to arrest slum growth. The Secretary-General's report set out the plan's strategic objectives, as well as detailing the focus areas on which UN-Habitat would concentrate for the period 2008-2013.

13. The systematic collection and analysis of scientific data on urban trends and issues over the past decade had provided the impetus for an emerging system-wide response in support of coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda. As other funds, programmes and agencies began to consider the impact of urbanization and urban growth in their respective areas of focus, there had been a substantial increase in joint activities. The report provided an overview of those coordinated responses.

14. The most pressing issues that had emerged in the last 12 months — climate change and the food crisis — were, on closer analysis, related to unsustainable patterns of urbanization. There could be no discussion of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change without focusing on cities, which represented half of the world's population but accounted for over 75 per cent of energy consumption and a similar percentage of waste, including greenhouse gas emissions. The urban poor would be worst affected by the food crisis since they could not produce food for their subsistence. The rise in the demand for energy, one of the contributing factors of the rise in food prices, also coincided with the scale and pace of urbanization. UN-Habitat therefore proposed that the Council should include sustainable urbanization, with a major focus on urban poverty, as a cross-cutting issue within the existing social, economic and environmental pillars for sustainable development.

15. **Mr. Hunte** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reiterated the need to address the issue of sustainable development in a holistic and balanced manner, giving equal emphasis to the three pillars of economic development, social development and environmental protection. Discussions at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in which the Group of 77 and China had participated, had reinforced the interlinked and mutually reinforcing nature of the issues in the thematic cluster for the 2008-2009 cycle: agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. During that session, the Group had stressed the need for renewed commitment to the Rio principles and had called for decisive action in addressing implementation gaps with regard to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Since developing countries still faced significant obstacles and constraints in their efforts to make further gains in sustainable-development-related areas, full implementation of commitments was critical to achieving the international development agenda.

16. The crises facing the international community, including climate change, the food and energy crises, financial turmoil and the prospect of a global economic recession, had compounded the development challenges for developing countries. In particular, there was an urgent need for strengthened climate change adaptation strategies in those countries; mitigation actions by both developed and developing countries, on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities, were also critical to achieving sustainable development goals. Since such actions would require increased financing and technology transfer, full implementation of the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Transfer and Capacity-building was vital.

17. Notwithstanding the new challenges to sustainable development that had emerged, the Council should also prioritize long-standing challenges such as the unfair trading policies of the developed countries, including the use of agricultural subsidies. The Council could also serve as a catalyst for the international community to better support developing countries' efforts to integrate sustainable development into their economic policymaking and planning. It was the Council's role to ensure that the Commission on Sustainable Development fulfilled its mandate of promoting further implementation of Agenda 21, identifying constraints on implementation and making recommendations for overcoming them. In particular, the Group of 77 hoped that the Commission would, at its 2009 policy session, issue action-orientated policy recommendations to address the shortfall in the areas of financial assistance and technology transfer.

18. **Mr. Hunte** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the issue of statistics, said that the Group considered full and effective implementation of the agreed goals and commitments of major United Nations conferences and summits to be of the highest priority. For that reason, at the most recent session of the Statistical Commission, it had emphasized the need to build on General Assembly resolution 60/265; follow-up to the development outcome of the 2005 World Summit, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and the other internationally agreed development goals, in order to establish a sound legislative framework for a more structured and coherent approach to implementing those goals. Governments should agree on the monitoring and follow-up mechanisms referred to in resolution 60/265 and the Organization in general and the Council, the Statistical Commission and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators in particular, should increase their efforts to develop a coherent and integrated system of implementation indicators based on intergovernmental consensus and the mandate of the Statistical Commission should be strengthened in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 57/270 B and 60/265 and Council resolution 2006/6.

19. While some indicators of progress existed for the first seven MDGs, the Organization had yet to establish benchmarks and targets in order to measure progress towards establishing a global partnership for development (Goal 8). The Group therefore looked forward to receiving from the Secretary-General an update on indicators to monitor implementation of the MDGs at the next session of the Statistical Commission, as indicated in the latter's decision 39/114 on development indicators.

20. **Mr. Mohamed** (Iraq), speaking on the issue of sustainable development, said that such development provided a basis for the social and economic well-being and prosperity that peoples desired for themselves, for future generations, for the equitable and rational use of natural resources and for the protection of the environment. Although Iraq had

undertaken to put in place the appropriate plans and strategies and had provided for environmental impact assessments, those considerations had been pushed into the background by war, the economic embargo and the deterioration of infrastructures. As a result, achieving sustainable development would require time, effort and resources; long-term planning; coordination with neighbouring countries; and the latest environmentally sound technology for production, distribution, consumption and energy generation and use.

21. In order to make its environmental action an integral part of international efforts, Iraq had become or was in the process of becoming a signatory to the appropriate international agreements in order to contribute to improving the environment at the international, regional and national levels. It hoped that the international community would support its efforts to address the after-effects of decades of war on its people, it soil and its agriculture by providing training, expertise, capacity-building and technology.

22. **Mr. Sumirat** (Indonesia), speaking on the issue of sustainable development, said that his delegation was encouraged at countries' efforts to incorporate economic, social and environmental principles into their development approaches and strategies despite the difficulties, such as the current food crisis, climate change and the slowing of the global economy, which threatened to make their efforts unsustainable and to reverse much of the progress made in reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs.

23. The discussion of agriculture, rural development, land use, drought, desertification and Africa at the May 2008 session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been timely and should lead to the development of substantive policies. For many developing countries, sustainable development depended on financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer. Agriculture, the main source of livelihood for their rural inhabitants, was in need of revitalization through greater investment, new technologies, better access to land and inputs and urgent reform of policies at the national and global levels. Developed countries' trade-distorting subsidies, tariff peaks and tariff escalation in areas of significance to developing countries should be eliminated.

24. Lastly, in order to produce genuine benefits for the poor and to enable them to deal effectively with issues such as climate change and the food and energy crises, the framework for sustainable development should be better formulated, including through an intersectoral approach incorporating macroeconomic, trade, environment, population and education policies.

25. **Ms. Valiente Díaz** (Cuba), speaking on the issue of sustainable development, said that for over 16 years, her Government had been warning the world about the dangers facing humanity; those warnings had become a harsh reality that affected rich and poor without distinction. The general consensus at the most recent session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been that the current global food crisis was being aggravated by, inter alia, the exorbitant price of oil; climate change and poor climatic conditions in major food-producing regions; the degradation of key natural resources; the reduction in global food stocks; and the diversion of grains and cereals for biofuel production by developed countries.

26. The food crisis concerned a growing number of countries and was recognized by both experts and institutions, including the World Bank. According to the Bank's World Development Report 2008, the burgeoning demand for agricultural feedstocks for biofuels had already pushed up world food prices. The real cause, however, was the fact that a handful of industrialized countries enjoyed a life of opulence and consumerism while the overwhelming majority of humanity lived in poverty.

27. Simply to deny development to those most in need was not a solution. States had common but differentiated responsibilities; those that were hoarding wealth and technology and were responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions must bear the lion's share in that regard. The European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid had recently acknowledged that development aid figures for 2007 had been way off target. European official development assistance (ODA) had fallen from 0.41 per cent to 0.38 per cent of gross national income (GNI); in real terms, that meant that the world's poor had been more than €1.7 billion worse off than in 2006. Such figures were unacceptable. Developed countries must mobilize additional resources to assist developing countries in their adaptation efforts, honour the mitigation-related commitments they had made in the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and establish mechanisms for technology transfer to developing countries.

28. If the international community really wanted to tackle the energy crisis and climate change, it must urge developed countries to change their unsustainable production and consumption patterns, honour their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol without introducing any new conditionalities, and set more ambitious emissions reduction targets under the programme adopted at the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change held in Bali in December 2007.

29. **Ms. Ovcharenko** (Russian Federation) said that strengthening the Commission on Sustainable Development would help ensure that decisions taken in United Nations forums were translated into action as a cooperative undertaking. The Commission should abide by the Organization's established practices in the constitution and operation of its bureau and the planning of its programme of work. In the coming year, it should make recommendations on the topical issues of agriculture, rural development, land use, and drought and desertification and should avoid repeating the negative experience of its fifteenth session (2007).

30. Turning to the issue of statistics and emphasizing the Statistical Commission's important coordinating role in setting international standards, she welcomed the recent adoption of new system of national accounts and of recommendations on statistics in the fields of industry, tourism and the wholesale and retail trade. The unprecedented scale of work in the most recent round of the International Comparison Programme was a great achievement and would provide a template for the optimum planning of international statistics activity in the future. The Commission's proceedings should remain technical and free of gratuitous politicization, particularly monitoring achievement of the MDGs.

31. Lastly, on the issue of population and development, she said that the outcome of the forty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development had been positive overall, particularly from the point of view of issues surrounding population distribution and urbanization. She hoped that future discussions would focus on the core matters of the session and disregard peripheral questions.

32. **Mr. Khaleel** (Observer for the Maldives), speaking on the issue of sustainable development, said that while the General Assembly had decided to graduate the Maldives from the list of least developed countries in December 2004, it had deferred the beginning of the three-year transition period until 2008 because of the extensive damage caused by the 2004 tsunami. As a small island developing State, the Maldives had particular vulnerabilities and faced ongoing environmental degradation. Its already fragile economy was suffering the added pressure of the world economic slowdown and food and energy crises.

33. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 59/209 on a smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries, the Maldives had already formed a consultative mechanism with its development and trading partners. The 2007 Partnership Forum had focused on investment opportunities and adapting to climate change and the 2008 Partnership Forum would address the issues of graduation and the establishment of economic policies and strategies to tackle the challenges of middle-income-country status. As the Council and the General Assembly had stressed repeatedly that graduation should not affect the development of the countries concerned, the Council should monitor their situation carefully during and after graduation.

34. **Mr. Soomro** (Pakistan), speaking on the issues of sustainable development and environment, said that developing countries faced the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, suffering the consequences of man-made and natural disasters for which they bore the least responsibility. Sustainable development was possible only within a strategic framework encompassing economic growth, social development and environmental protection; however, developing countries must cope with competing needs caused by current circumstances and external influences. They must maintain high levels of growth in order to eradicate poverty and ensure dignity, create the infrastructure needed to ensure that the benefits of growth were sustainable and equitably distributed and respond to the impact of and needs arising from climate change and environmental damage.

35. Despite the principles, agendas and action plans adopted at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference, and despite the discussions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, there was still no integrated model that could ensure sustained growth of 7 per cent to 8 per cent and carbon-free development. Even at a

time when developing countries were turning to carbon-free economies and adopting alternative sources of energy, the States members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) were being pressed to increase their output of fossil fuels.

36. Only the establishment of national models offering the desired rate of growth could lead to a global model that met the needs of development and sustainable growth simultaneously, placing development first. Developing countries currently had too little access to carbon-friendly technology and no assurance that such technology would be affordable. Rather than continuing inaction, a concerted effort to evaluate both needs and shortfalls in meeting them must be made.

37. **Mr. Hart** (Barbados), speaking on the issue of sustainable development, recalled that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had recognized a distinct category of small island developing States; however, that resistance to the establishment of an ambitious programme targeting those States had followed. The Barbados Programme of Action, which had come into being despite that resistance, had made the United Nations, its Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Commission on Sustainable Development responsible for follow-up measures. Those mandates had subsequently been reaffirmed and strengthened by the Mauritius Declaration and Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

38. However, a lack of resources was hampering implementation and resulting in the severe understaffing of the Small Island Developing States unit within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at a time of economic, social and environmental vulnerability for the States concerned. Climate change and rising sea levels endangered their sustainable development, and even their existence since they must also cope with the impact of the global food and oil crises caused by factors outside their control.

39. Small island developing States must lead and own their development. Barbados had thoroughly reviewed its implementation of the Mauritius Strategy across all sectors and had found that over 75 per cent success had been achieved, despite the lack of support from the international community. However, all small island developing States needed to work with the international community to find lasting solutions to their challenges through renewed responsibility, strengthened commitment, deeper partnership and more effective implementation of commitments.

40. **Mr. Falatar** (Observer for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO had first sounded the alarm over the need for sustainable development in 1968, when it had organized a conference questioning the world's unbridled exploitation of nature. Since its inception, UNESCO had developed a number of international programmes aimed at better assessing and managing the Earth's resources, including the International Hydrological Programme, the Man and the Biosphere Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

41. In the field of natural sciences UNESCO strengthened developing countries' capacities [illegible] sciences, engineering and technology by providing data, advice and technical assistance aimed at helping governments formulate and implement effective policies and strategies. Since 1976, it had assigned biosphere reserve status to areas nominated by Member States; such reserves were learning laboratories for sustainable living that were used to demonstrate techniques for conserving biodiversity. Sustainability was attained through research, training, education, monitoring and community participation in governance and management. There were currently 529 such reserves in 105 countries.

42. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) supported United Nations agencies and Member States in implementing the many provisions on the sustainable development of oceans, coasts and islands contained in Agenda 21, the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. It had also established the Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS), which oversaw and coordinated global and regional sea level networks in support of climate, oceanographic and coastal sea level research. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), IOC was implementing the Adaptation to Climate Change in Coastal Zones (ACCC) project in Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and

Senegal: the project aimed to perform adaptation actions in pilot sites particularly vulnerable to natural climate changes and anthropogenic degradation and to formulate national and regional adaptation strategies aimed at managing the impact of shoreline changes within the framework of integrated coastal area management.

43. With regard to ocean observation, the development of the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) by IOC, in co-sponsorship with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Council for Science (ICSU), was making good progress. IOC was also helping protect the marine environment by leading, jointly with UNEP, the current phase of the regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects. That phase, which would end in 2009, focused on the compilation and harmonization of existing assessments of the marine environment on a regional scale in preparation for the establishment of a regular global process. IOC was also currently chairing the UN-Oceans mechanism.

44. In respect of early warning systems for tsunamis and other marine hazards, IOC had established intergovernmental coordination groups for the Indian Ocean, the North-Eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and connected seas, and the Caribbean Sea and adjacent regions, as well as an ad hoc Working Group to prepare a framework for a global tsunami and other ocean-related hazards early warning system.

45. If the challenges currently facing the world were to be addressed effectively, education must be used to promote knowledge, values and skills and enable attitudinal and behavioural changes at the individual and institutional levels. As coordinating agency, UNESCO had been actively promoting the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) by working with Member States, the private sector, civil society and other United Nations agencies to improve access to quality basic education, reorient existing education programmes, develop public understanding and awareness and provide training. It was also mobilizing its global network of UNESCO Chairs and Associated Schools with a focus on aligning itself with national capacity-building in such areas as education planning and management, teacher, technical and vocational training and non-formal and distance education.

46. In order to achieve sustainable growth, it was also necessary to address the cultural and social effects of development and certain sensitive and ethical issues. The International Bioethics Committee was the only international body dealing with bioethics, while the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) had helped identify the ethical issues involved, detect early signs of risk to society and establish principles and guidelines that could inspire policy choices.

47. Culture played a crucial role in national and international development frameworks. It encouraged economic and social development, contributed to poverty eradication and sustainable development and played an increasingly important economic role as a productive sector. Above all, cultural diversity was a collective force for development. The MDGs would never be attained in a sustainable manner unless the cultural dimension underpinning every society in the world was addressed.

48. **Mr. Sèth** (Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), responding to the concerns raised by the Group of 77 and China, said that the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Gap Task Force, established by the Secretary-General in 2007, was in the process of examining the indicators relating to Goal 8 of the MDGs in order to identify gaps in implementation of the global partnership for development. Once it had finished its work, the Task Force would issue a report, which would provide crucial input to the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals to be held in September 2008; the challenge was to see how it could also be used to enrich the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies and the discussions held in the context of the annual ministerial review. He hoped that once the report was ready, a modality could be found for submitting it to the Council and, if appropriate, the Statistical Commission in order to give them an opportunity to discuss how the relevant indicators might be developed further.

(a) Sustainable development (*continued*) (E/2008/29; E/2008/L.23)

Recommendation entitled "Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its sixteenth session and provisional agenda for the seventeenth session of the Commission" (E/2008/29)

49. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its sixteenth session and provisional agenda for the seventeenth session of the Commission", contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its sixteenth session (E/2008/29).

50. *The draft decision was adopted.*

Draft resolution entitled "Report of the Committee for Development Policy on its tenth session" (E/2008/L.23)

51. **The President** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

52. *Draft resolution E/2008/L.23 was adopted.*

(c) Statistics (*continued*) (E/2008/24)

Recommendation entitled "Report of the Statistical Commission on its thirty-ninth session and provisional agenda and dates for the fortieth session of the Commission" (E/2008/24)

53. **The President** invited the Council to take action on the draft decision entitled "Report of the Statistical Commission on its thirty-ninth session and provisional agenda and dates for the fortieth session of the Commission", contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the Statistical Commission on its thirty-ninth session (E/2008/24).

54. *The draft decision was adopted.*

(d) Human settlements (*continued*) (E/2008/L.24)

Draft decision entitled "Human settlements" (E/2008/L.24)

55. **The President** said that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

56. *Draft decision E/2008/L.24 was adopted.*

(e) Environment (*continued*) (A/63/25; E/2008/L.21)

Draft resolution entitled "Protection against products harmful to health and the environment" (E/2008/L.21)

57. **The President** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

58. *Draft resolution E/2008/L.21 was adopted.*

Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on its tenth special session (A/63/25)

59. **The President** suggested that the Council should take note of the report.

60. *It was so decided.*

(f) Population and development (*continued*) (E/2008/25)

Draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-first session and provisional agenda for its forty-second session" (E/2008/25)

61. **The President** invited the Council to take action on the draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-first session and provisional agenda for its forty-second session", contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-first session (E/2008/25).

62. *The draft decision was adopted.*

(i) Assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions (*continued*)

63. **The President** informed the Council that no advance documentation had been submitted under the agenda item and no draft proposal was before the Council. The relevant paragraph of the Council's annotated provisional agenda (E/2008/100) provided the background to and rationale for the item's continued inclusion in the Council's agenda.

(j) Cartography (*continued*) (E/2007/89; E/2008/L.25)

Draft decision entitled "Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names" (E/2008/L.25)

64. **The President** said that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

65. *Draft decision E/2008/L.25 was adopted.*

Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the work of its twenty-fourth session (E/2007/89)

66. **The President** suggested that the Council should take note of the report.

67. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.